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THE
Preachers Precept
OF
CONSIDERATION:
OR,
Englands chief Lesson and Duty
In this sad time of
VISITATION.

Wherein is contained,

1. *A Catalogue and Collection of all the particular capital Sins mentioned in Scripture, whereby sometimes Princes, and sometimes People, have provoked God to inflict this sore Judgment upon a Nation.*
2. *The Authors opinion and judgment, for which and why it is, that this unparallel'd Visitation is now laid upon us.*

Delivered in the Parish Church of
St. Katherine Coleman, London, upon the
Monthly Fast-days set apart for *Humiliation*, by
His Majesties special Command.

by Jeremiah Dodson

L O N D O N:

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Preachers Precept

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And the note I find, that

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Approved by the Court for the Answer: _____

THE
PREACHERS PRECEPT
OF
Consideration.

ECCLES. VII. 14.

*In the day of Prosperity be Joyfull, but in the day
of Adversity Consider.*



T's the Wisemans observation before,
Chap. 3. 1. *That to every thing there is
a season, and a time to every purpose under
the Sun :* particularly, *vers. 4. there
is (sayes he) a time to weep, and a time
to laugh ; a time to mourn, and a time to
dance. And reason good that it should
be so ; for seeing that mans present
condition is subject to many and fre-
quent alterations : our Life, like the Sea, ebbing and flowing,
and with the Air, being now cloudy, and anon clear ; seeing* (a) *Seneca i*
that Nulla fors longa est, as the (a) *Tragedian sayes very truly,* (b) *Job 14. 2.*
(b) We continue not long in one state ; but (c) Sicut noctis & dies, (c) Cartwright
hyemis & aestatis vicissitudo est ; i. e. As the day hath the vicissitudo

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situde of an evening and morning, and the year of a Winter and Summer; so Health and Sicknes, Peace and War, Prosperity and Adversity interchangeably succeed each other, in this our earthly pilgrimage: what therefore is more rational, fit, and natural, than that as our outward condition is various and mutable, so likewise our inward disposition of minde should be answerable, and our spiritual frame, be futable to our temporal Estate? This I am sure hath been the practice of the true children and servants of God in all ages, who in dayes of Affliction and publick Calamity, alwayes sought unto God with *Prayers and Tears, with Fasting and Humiliation*; and after Deliverance and Restauration, used to set forth the glory of his Name with *Anthems of joy and exultation*: they wisely and with due consideration, imployed and exercised their hearts and tongues to utter before God, either *Hosanna's* or *Hallelujahs*, sometimes *Prayers*, and sometimes *Prayses*, as occasion required. And as this was the *Saints Practice* every where and in all ages; so 'tis the *Wisemens Precept* here, *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but, &c.* Which latter clause I shall confine my Discourse unto, as conteining in few words, both very much, and very good seasonable advice for this sad time of *Visitation*.

In the whole sentence, though it may seem that there is not a direct opposition in words and terms, yet we shall find the expression more emphatical and didactical, than if it had been so. The *Wiseman* indeed does not say, *In the time of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity be sorrowful, but consider*: And the reason as I conceive is this, Because outward sorrow may be worldly and carnal, selfish and hypocritical, yeilding neither honour nor glory to *Gods holy Name*, nor yet any advantage or comfort to the party affected therewith: for men many times are of a *sad countenance*, and (as our blessed Saviour speaks, *Matth. 6. 16.*) *do disfigure their faces on purpose that they may appear unto men to be sorry*, and there is all. But an inward and serious, a deep and religious consideration never fails to bring forth the fruits and good effects that God expects. This is that which makes a man enter into his Closet, that so he may *commune with his own heart*, hear his case tried
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in the *Court of Conscience*, humble himself in dust and ashes, and poure forth his soul in secret to God; *who never fails* (as our Saviour there shews, *vers.* 4, 6, 18.) not only to own and regard, but also to crown and reward all such secret acts of devotion, openly. Whereas the *Wise-man* therefore here doth not say, *Be sad and sorrowful in the time of adversity*, but *consider*; I conceive it is because the expression is much more emphatical, comprehensive, and didactical (as I said before) and doth indeed directly point out, and plainly teach us, without any kind of circumlocution, what is the main duty that God expects and requires at our hands in times of Affliction and Tribulation, and that is to *Consider*. And truly no wonder, for of *This* it may well be said, that Πᾶς ἀπὸ αὐτῆς; i. e. virtually it is every good Duty: For as much as we know that *Self-examination, Self-accusation, and Condemnation, Prayer and Supplication, Repentance, Faith in Gods Promises, Resolutions of new Obedience, &c.* they are all the fruits that spring from this root; they are all conceived (as 'twere) in this Wombe; they are the spiritual brood and offspring; but *Consideration* is the *Alma Mater*, the heavenly Parent and Mother of them. *Consideration!* 'tis *Spiritus Sancti quadam Fabrica vel Officina*, i. e. the spiritual shop and workhouse (as it were) of the Holy Ghost, wherein he secretly forgeth and fashioneth upon the Anvil of a truly broken and contrite heart, all the pieces of that excellent armour of proof, that Παύλος τῷ Τιμῳ, which the Apostle speaks of *Ephes. 6*. In a word, *Consideration!* 'tis the *Handmaid* of spiritual Knowledge, and the *Mistress* of all true Devotion; without which no acceptable service can be performed by us to God. Whereas, if men would but now and then bestow an hour or two in serious thoughts, and soberly consider how the case stands betwixt Almighty God and their souls; whether they be in a state of Grace, or of Nature; of Peace with God, or under Wrath; and, *What they must do that they may be saved*: doubtless, they would find themselves better disposed to the service of God, than now they are: For the truth is, the principal reason that so many persons in the world are no better, is, because they will not *Consider*, and seriously meditate on their spiritual state and condition. The cares and affairs, the profits and pleasures of this life, do so wholly

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ingross their hearts; and imploy their heads, that the concerns of their immortal precious souls, and the things of another life, are not regarded. And hence it is that the labours of faithful Ministers are so unsuccessfull; the good and serious advice of Friends and Parents is no more followed; and all the Means of Grace, and methods of God for the reclaiming of sinful Offenders, affect no more, and operate no better; namely, because they will not consider. *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth,* (sayes Almighty God himself by the Prophet, *Isa. 1. 2, 3.*) *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Masters crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* Yea, hence it is, that though life and death, good and

- (d) Deut. 30. evil, (as (d) Moses speaks) are set before us, and put to our choice; 15. yet the generality of people in the world, live as persons not at all concerned whether there be a God or no; an Heaven, or an Hell; eternal Joyes, or everlasting Torments. So that a serious consideration is very good and necessary for us even at all times: but the most proper season for it (as Solomon tells us) is the time of affliction; *In the time of Adversity Consider.*

Whence the point of Doctrin that offers it self to our Consideration is this:

Doct.

That when Gods Judgements are in the Earth, and the sad tokens of his displeasure appear against a Person, or a Nation, then it's a proper season for them seriously to lay things to heart, and wisely to consider.

The guise and custom of all Atheistical Epicures, and graceless Worldlings, is quite contrary; who when any crosses, disasters, or losses are in judgement inflicted upon them, do not retire into their Closets, and there enter into a serious meditation of the matter, *communing with their own hearts, and considering* who it is that smites them, and for what: but either with Curling, Oaths, and Execrations, they break forth into repining and murmuring against Gods dispensations towards them, which many times end in Despair; or else they run to the Tavern or Alehouse, that so in the jovial company of good fellows, they may drown the sense of all sorrow and care, and *shunt and non-plu* (if it be possible) the end and design of God

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in punishing them. His good end certainly was to humble them, and reclaim them from their iniquities, but they listen not to the voice of his Rod, but in *lascivium & luxum profligant*; resolve to take their full swinge in voluptuousness; saying, (c) *Let us eat and drink, and enjoy the good things of this life*; let us crown our selves with Rose-buds, and leave tokens of our mirth and jollity in every place. This is the common deportment and practice of the ungodly in time of adversity. And this they are either betrayed into by their own deceitful, vile, carnal hearts; or else they are byassed by the great and general custom of the world; or else they are prompted to it by Satan; who knows full well that a due and serious Consideration would take them from him, and make them quickly renounce and abhor all wicked wayes: And therefore it is, that he doth still with all his might and subtilty strive to divert and disswade them from it, as a most childish, sad, and dumpish melancholy course, which probably may endanger their health, but can otherwise do them no good. Whereby it appears, that the more necessary any Duty is, the more opposite Satan and our false carnal hearts are thereunto: For there is not a more advantageous, usefull, and profitable, nor a more excellent, heavenly and acceptable Duty (as I shall shew more fully hereafter) for a good Christian to be exercised in at all times, and upon all occasions, in all estates and conditions, especially in the day of adversity, than this of a serious Consideration. And therefore it is that Almighty God commends it unto us so much in Scripture, as a singular means to help and direct us how to steer our courses aright: as Deut. 32. 29. *Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.* Psal. 4. 4. *Stand in awe, and sin not, commune with your own hearts, and be still.* Prov. 4. 26. *Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established;* and Hag. 1. 5, 7. *Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways.* In which remarkable place, the Adverb *Now*, and Conjunction *Therefore*, plainly point out the Time and Occasion when and wherefore God required them to practise this duty of Consideration. The Children of Israel being brought home to Jerusalem again, out of their long Captivity

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in *Babylon*, were exceeding backward and negligent in their carrying on the work and building of the *House of the Lord*. Forward enough it seems they were to erect and prepare sumptuous buildings, and neat habitations for themselves; the Prophet calls them *cieled Houses*, (v. 4.) but the *house of the Lord*, they let that lye waste, pretending (forsooth, v. 2.) that it was not a fit time yet to doe it. This was their Crime. Now the Judgment which God inflicted upon them for it, was that of *Famine*, as v. 6, 9, 10, 11. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it: and why, saith the Lord of Hosts? because of mine House that is waste, and ye run every man to his own house. Therefore the Heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the Earth is stayed from her fruits: And I called for a drought upon the Land, and upon the Mountains, and upon the Corn, and upon the new Wine, and upon the Oyl, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth; and upon Men, and upon Cattel, and upon all the labour of the hands. Surely a deplorable, sad, and most miserable state and condition. And what is now the duty that God, the great Physician of Souls, puts them upon here by the Prophet; and that both in order to a speedy and thorow Reformation of themselves, as well as for the happy procuring of his loving kindness, and gracious reconciliation towards them? Why, it is nothing but this, Consider your wayes. A duty, which the Prophet *Haggai* seems to look back upon as an *Inftar omnium*: and therefore it is observable, that he presseth no other duty upon them in the whole Prophecy. Neither doth he content himself to deliver his Message authoritatively, with a [חנני חנני חנני &c.] thus saith the Lord of Hosts, as here in this Chapter; but again afterwards to enforce the same, he earnestly prays and intreats them to fall upon the speedy performance of it; as *Chap. 2. v. 15. to 20.* Which frequent inculcation of the Precept, serves to teach us two things by the way:

1. The strange stupidity of the People; in that they were no more affected with those manifest marks and tokens of Gods indignation; no, though he had snatched their very Meat out of their mouths. And then,
2. The great necessity of the Duty in times of distress. So that

of Consideration.

that when Gods Judgments are in the Earth, and the sad tokens of his displeasure appear against a Person or Nation, then its a proper season for them seriously to lay things to heart, and wisely to consider.

In the prosecution of this Point, I do intend to proceed in this method :

Method.

1. By way of Explication, to acquaint you with the Nature of the Duty in general ; as also the Subject matter thereof ; touching which I shall a little upon the two great Circumstances of most convenient Time and Place.

2. By way of Confirmation, to subjoyn some Reasons for the proof of the Point.

3. To bring all home to our selves in an effectual Application.

1. For the first of these, Consideration in general, It is a deliberate serious Act of the practical part of mans Understanding, whereby he reflects and museth upon both his own Actions, and Gods Dispensations ; and by comparing the one with the other in the Court of Conscience, and according to the Rule of Gods holy Will revealed in his Word, he draws up Conclusions against himself, and secretly takes up good Resolutions to justifie God, and to repent and reform himself.

Explication.

2. As for the Subject matter of it, it may be considered either more generally, or more specially.

More generally, the subject matter of our Consideration should be the visible causes and consequences of things ; the evident Outgoings of God in the world, and the present Operations of his hands, and that both more privately as to our selves, as well as more publickly as to the Church and State where we live ; all things indeed that happen either to our selves or others that we are any way related unto, whether casually and accidentally, so far as we can see, or by an apparent hand of Providence.

More specially, in the day of adversity, the time here specified in my Text, the Subject matter of our Consideration should be these five things following :

1. The Affliction it self, the Evil, Disaster, or Visitation, whatever it be that is befalling us.

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2. The Author and the Dispenser of it.
 3. The Ground, or the procuring and Meritorious Cause of it.

4. The End, or the minde and meaning of God therein.

5. The good way and means that we are to use, that so it may be removed from us, or at least we may have it sanctified to us. I content my self with the bare naming of these things here, in the *Explication*, because I intend to enlarge my self to the full upon them in the *Application*.

3. Now the two *Circumstances* of most convenient *Time* and *Place* follow. And

1. For *Place*; though it be indifferent in respect of God, whether it be *in the field with Isaac*, or *in the house with Daniel*, at home or abroad, walking or sitting; yet I conceive that a solitary, and a *Place* set apart for pious purposes is the most proper and fit for this Exercise: And such in particular are our own *private Walks* and *Closets*; to which our *Saviour* himself directs us, *Matth. 6. 6.* Or else the publick *House of Gods Worship*; which (f) *St. Paul* would have us frequent for this purpose, according to the example of *King David*, *Psal. 27. 4.* And then,

2. For *Time*; the *Lords Day* in particular is the most proper time in the Week, and ordinarily calls upon us, as well as those *Solemn Days of Fasting and Humiliation* do in extraordinary manner put us in minde of this duty. But though it must be chiefly intended on those *Holy-dayes*, yet it must not be neglected on other days, but some time convenient must be set apart for this good work every day. As for the hour, or precise space of time in the day, each mans own *Experience* must instruct him, and his *Occasions* direct him; whether to take the golden hour of the Morning, when he is most fresh, free from distraction, and fittest for Meditation; And thus

(g) Gen. 28.
16.

(b) Gen. 24. 63.

(i) Acts 10. 9.

(k) Psal. 55. 19.

& Dan. 6. 10.

(g) *Jacob* did: Or the still hour of the Evening, when he hath ended his labours; which was (b) *Isaac's* time: Or the middlest of the day; which was (i) *St. Peters*: Or else any other part of the day, if not all three; which, as it appears, were holy *Dauids*, and devout *Daniels* (k) *hours of devotion*.

I mention here these two *Circumstances* of *Time* and *Place*, because

because I know them to be very usefull and necessary helps and furtherances for all such as desire to perform this duty to purpose; I mean, so as to reap *benefit* and *comfort* by it. For, to say nothing of the natural avernsness and indisposition of our own *hearts* to this good work, nor yet of *Satans* subtil suggestions, and secret opposition whereby he strives to keep us back, or at least interrupt and take us off from it; such and so great are most mens hinderances and distractions, so many are the Obstructions and Obstacles that they meet with (partly through multiplicity of business, their worldly employments at home and abroad; partly through the mutability of their mindes and dispositions, with the instability of their affections and roving Fancies) that unless some convenient *Times* and *Places* be set a part for the exercise of it, it is very likely to be performed but sleightly and superficially, unconstantly, and unprofitably, nay perhaps not at all by them. *There is* (as the *(l)* *Wise man* tells us) *an appointed Time for every* (l) *Eccel.* 3.1. *thing else*; and shall then so weighty, so concerning a *Duty* as this have no share in it; which yet might justly challenge our attendance upon it at all times? And as for some certain and set place, 'tis likewise as necessary; because we shall finde the least and fewest *Impediments* there, where we are most accustomed to draw neer to God either in Reading, Prayer, or Meditation. Our *(m)* *Saviour* himself (I am sure) *(m)* *John* 18. took this course, and also used his *Disciples* to it, and then well 1, 2. with Luk. 22. 39, 40. may we follow *his* and their example, as an excellent means to make us both more carefull, and constant in the performance of holy duties.

1. I say, *carefull*, as to the *manner*; (*sanctè magis quàm sciè*, as he † says well) in regard we have now placed our selves in the *presence* of God, and are come to converse and make our addressees immediately to *Him*, who is *The searcher of the heart*. † *Seneca.*

2. *Constant*, as to the *Matter*; the revolution of time being a certain *Remembrancer* of the duty: the wilful, the negligent, or excusatory omission whereof, when the prefixed time is come, is that which occasions the great unsiftness and indisposition that many complain of.

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Confirmation. And so I have done with the *Explication*: the *Confirmation* now follows; and the *Reasons* of the *Point* are three.

Reas. 1. 1. Because, *To lay things seriously to heart, and religiously to consider in the day of Adversity* is the most proper Answer and Echo to Gods correcting angry hand, and that spiritual improvement which He expects that we should make of His chastising us. *The Lords voyce cryeth unto the City,* (says the

(a) Micah 6. (n) Prophet) *and the man of Wisdom shall see thy Name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.* Whence we may gather, that as God speaks to men by his Word, even so He seems to call out, and cry to them by the *Voyce of his Rod*: And the principal end in the first place is, to make them listen, *stand still,* and consider what is his minde and meaning thereby. It is observable in that excellent Prayer of King Solomons at the Dedication of the Temple, that one Petition very pertinently

(o) 1 King. 8. to our purpose runs thus, (o) *If there be in the Land a Famine, if there be Pestilence, &c. whatsoever Plague, whatsoever Sickness there be; What Prayer and Supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the Plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this House: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, &c.* Whence it appears, that the duty of seeking to Him by Prayer, which cannot be done without Consideration, is that which God in the first place expects and looks for in the evil day, before men must think to obtain deliverance. The want whereof he sorely complains of, as you heard (p) before:

(p) Isa. 1. 2, 3. So Amos 4. 6, 8, 10, 11. where notwithstanding his hand was against the children of Israel in divers respects, *Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord; and Jer. 8. 6. I hearkened, and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Again,*

Reas. 2. 2. Because, *a religious, due, and serious consideration* is the most expedite and compendious way, 1, and indeed the only method prescribed in Scripture for the obtaining of Gods favour and Reconciliation.

(q) Psal. 119. David first considered his wayes (q) before
59.
(r) Luk. 15. 17. he turned his feet to Gods Testimonies: And the Prodigal Son came first home (r) to himself, by the consideration of his lewd courses, before he came home back again to his Father. So

that

that Conversion, true Repentance, and Reformation, always begin at *Consideration*, but it still happily ends with the *love and favour of God*. For, when once a sinful Person or Nation by a Religious self-reflexion have learned to renounce all their iniquities and evil deeds, then (s) *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, even so the Lord*, with that compassionate Father of the Prodigal, is ready to *run to embrace and receive them*, with the sweetest evidences and demonstrations of his love and favour: (t) *Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord; and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* (s) Psal. 103. 13. (t) Il. 55. 7. & Ezek. 18. 11. Joel 2. 12, 13. 14. & Zech. 1. 3.

3. Because this impartial and faithful dealing betwixt God and our own souls, in a religious, due, and serious *Consideration*, is an infallible token and evidence of our sincerity; and so must needs prove an excellent Cordial to chear us up in the day of adversity. Hypocrisie may teach men to multiply outside performances, and make them ready to say to others, as sometime Jehu did to Jehonadab, (u) *Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord*; for all that such doe (as our Saviour shews) *is that they may be seen of men*. But sincerity draws the heart inward, and never let's a man be at rest untill he have made his peace with God. For which end, it puts him upon self-examination, self-accusation, hearty repentance, prayer and supplication, with resolutions of new obedience, and a serious *consideration* in general how for the future he may do most good, and may best lay forth himself for the *honour and glory of God*. Now when this great work is done, there is nothing can happen amiss to that man; the inward testimony of his own Conscience is to Him a *Continual Feast*, and now he finds by happy experience, *that all things cannot choose but work together for his good*: Christ is his Friend, by Faith in whose merits his peace and reconciliation is wrought with Almighty God, and then what cares he who is his Foe? Heaven is his home, and then what cares he what he may suffer by the way? *that* † far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, he knows will † 2 Cor. 4. 17. outweigh, and abundantly compensate all those *light and momentary afflictions* that may befall him here upon Earth; nay,

- (x) Rom. 8. 18. he is sure there is no (x) comparison betwixt them. And therefore he resolves to *fight a good fight, and keep the faith*, yea though it be with the loss of his life, as being assured *that* (y) *henceforth there is layd up for him a Crown of righteousness.*
- (y) 2 Tim. 4. 7. 8. Rom. 8. 35, 37. These are the reasons of the point; by all which it appears, that if we desire either, 1. To answer Gods expectation, and make a wise and profitable improvement of His chastising hand upon us; Or, 2. To enjoy the sweet tokens and evidences of His unspeakable love and favour, (z) *which is better than life*; Or else, 3. Have any comfortable argument of our sincerity, and so some good ground of joy and comfort in the worst of calamities, then we must *seriously lay things to heart, and religiously consider in the day of Adversity.*
- Use 1. Of Reprehension. Branch 1. And if it be so, this then justly serves to reprove and condemn those that live in carnal security, and inconsiderately, I, and perhaps incorrigibly too, still run on in their vain evil ways, as if they were not at all concerned. They know very well, or at least have frequently heard from Gods Word (a) *that the wages of sin is death*: and they have been taught, how (b) *dreadful and fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, who is indeed (c) a consuming fire.* But yet notwithstanding, as if they had made a (d) *Covenant with death, and with hell were at an agreement*, and the loss of Gods loving kindness and favour were not considerable, they are apt to put from them the evil day, and think they have still time enough to repent, presuming, that although the overflowing scourge pass through the City, or the whole Land, yet it shall not come nigh unto them; and so they run on in their evil courses, after (e) *their hardness and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath unto themselves against the most dreadful day of wrath.* Now against this sort of men the (f) *Prophet justly denounceth a Woe*; for the harp, the viol, the tabret and pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of His hands. In that day (saves (g) *he very smartly*) the Lord God of hosts called to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: But behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep; eating flesh and drinking wine; Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die. And what then follows? It

was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts; Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you dye, saith the Lord God of hosts. It is a most wretched frame of spirit for men to grow secure in sin, and not learn righteousness, when as Gods judgments are in the earth, and his hand of Vengeance is stretched forth, not with a scourge of Cords but Scorpions, to punish and plague them for their iniquities. This is a sign of desperate wickedness, and the principal cause I verily believe, why the judgments of God in this present sore *Visitation* are * still so long, and severely executed upon us, and his wrath seems daily still to wax hotter and hotter against us: The Lord God of heaven be graciously pleased to touch our hard hearts, and make us sadly reflect upon it: Remember, I pray you, that terrible Vision of the Prophet Ezekiel concerning Jerusalem; which both in respect of the cause and effects of Gods indignation, seems too too applicable at this time to this populous City of London. The cause of Gods anger you will find was that, which we must now needs confess our selves to be guilty of, viz. *The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah, which was grown exceeding great, the City being full of perverseness, and practical Atheisme: For they stuck not to say, the Lord hath forsaken the Earth; tush, God seeth not.* Chap. 9. 9. And for the Effects, London and Jerusalem, England and Israel may shake hands, as v. 10. *Quapropter etiam ego, &c.* Therefore as for me also, saith the Lord, *Mine eyes shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompense their way upon their head.* And you will find, He did it much in the same manner, that He doth even now amongst us: For the Six Executioners, v. 2. that He sent forth with slaughtering weapons in their hands, they had a strict charge and Commission given them, v. 3, 6. *to goe after the Man Cloathed in Linnen, with the Writers Inkhorn by his side, and kill and destroy all before them; Let not your eye spare, (sayes he) neither have ye pity, but slay utterly old and young, both Maids and little Children, and women; and save none but onely those that your Forerunner hath marked in their Foreheads: And those were but a small remnant that did seriously lay things to heart, and sigh and mourn for all the abominations that were done among them, v. 4.* Think I beseech you upon this

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this sad *Vision*, and I hope it may be an effectual means to rouze and awake you all out of your sinfull carnal security, and for the future make you *Consider*; *consider* (I mean) how the Case stands betwixt God and your own Souls; *consider* your latter end, and the things that concern your *eternal peace*, lest they be hid from your eyes.

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And then again, as it serves to reprove and condemn carnal security on the one hand; So on the other, to rebuke and correct that undue and dangerous affection of *overmuch fearfulness* and despondency, which too too many of both Sexes, but women especially, are by nature inclinable to. 'Tis true indeed, our utmost *Wisdom* and *Discretion*, and all possible care is necessary both for the preventing, and for the avoyding of danger: But I know nothing more unseasonable, nor many times of more dangerous consequence than a desponding Principle of Fear, and apprehensive imagination. The effects whereof (as we all find by frequent experience and observation) strangely sometimes prove destructive and deadly to those, which otherwise were placed (*Æo stans*) out of all probable reach of danger. Now if you inquire what may be the Cause, and what also the Cure of this unhappy *Infirmity*: I answer briefly; The Cause may be either,

Causes of fearfulness.

1. A Natural inclination to *Fearfulness*: Or else,
2. Want of Faith and Resolution, because people are not *animo presenti*, they do not carry their lives in their hands, that so they might be ready and willing to lay down the same, and chearfully resign them up when God shal please: Or else,
3. A consciousness to themselves of their unfitness, and unpreparedness at present to dye, and to appear before God in Heaven: Or else,
4. A dreadful apprehension of the great pain and terror of death; and that perhaps as to the *Manner* and kind of death, as well as the *Matter*, their corporal dissolution. Or lastly,
5. A frightfull foresight, and self-condemning Meditation upon that which ensues after Death, *Judgement to come*; the

b A&B. 24, 25.

(b) reasoning and discoursing whereof by St. Paul, made Felix tremble. Some or all these things before mentioned are, I conceive, the causes of this *Passion* in People.

And

And now for the perfect and certain Cure and remedy thereof, I know nothing in the whole world comparable to the due exercise of this great Duty of Consideration. As

1. That there is nothing comes to pass without the permission and knowledge of God; nothing indeed befalls us by chance; but the most casual and accidental contingences, events and consequences (howsoever we may think or judge of them) are over-ruled, and steered, and guided in a determinate manner by *His Providence*; which is the great *Wright and Plumber* (as it were) that sets and keeps all the *Wheels* a going; whether bigger or lesser, in the vast *Clock*, the whole *Fabrick of Nature*: Inasmuch that nothing is done without it, not so much as a (i) *sparrow falls on the ground, no nor an hair* (i) *Mat. 10. from any of our heads without it.* Now this one thought and consideration naturally prompts us all to submission, and self-resignation, and also affords us matter of comfort and consolation. First, it prompts us all to submission, forasmuch as He is the great Creator and Governour of all things, the ever blessed and only Potentate, our Lord Paramount and absolute Sovereign, whose we are by the right of Creation, Redemption, and Preservation too. And therefore, if it be but civil and reasonable (as we say) to give men leave to do what they will with their own; We may well be content to allow the same Privilege to *The Almighty*, and rest well satisfied with his good Will and Pleasure in all things, *who* knows far better what is good for us, than we our selves. Thus did *David*, 2 *Sam.* 12. 18, 20. and likewise old *Eli*, 1 *Sam.* 3. Where when he heard what terrible things were decreed against his house and posterity, enough to make both the ears of every one that should hear them, to tingle; (vers. 11.) He neither repined nor murmured against it, but only said like a meek good Man, *Jehovah est; &c.* as the Lord, let Him do what seemeth him good, vers. 18. And thus lastly did our Saviour, who though as Man, He could not but wish and pray that (i) *the chalice* (i) *Mat. 26. cup of his approaching Death and Passion might pass from him,* 39. 42. Yet *Non mea, sed fiat voluntas tua*: (says He) not my will, but thy blessed will be done. And then secondly, it also affords us matter of comfort and consolation, and that in the midst and

worst of tryals, or evils, that can befall us, or our Relations; inasmuch as He is thorow *Jesus Christ* the *Father of mercies*, and hath graciously promised (l) *that all things shall work together for our good*, and that *he will never leave us nor forsake us*. Love and Mercy (as the Psalmist intimates) is ever more one Ingredient in all his Dispensations towards us: Inasmuch that I dare deliver it for a *certain Truth*, though perhaps a *seeming Paradox*, that many times it is a mercy that God is pleased to remove and withdraw a mercy from us. For we may be sure, if he take away one, it is that thereby He may make way for another, a greater and better to be bestowed upon us. Thus He oft withdraws *temporal Comforts*, to make room in mens hearts for *Spiritual Blessings* and *Graces*; thus He oft denies health to our bodies, to make us mind the welfare of our souls; yea, thus He oft deprives his own dear Children and Servants of a *natural life*, that so He may take them unto Himself, and put them into a full and actual possession of heavenly joys. The Prophet *Isaiah* averrs what I say; Chap. 57. 1, 2. The consideration whereof, I suppose, was that which enabled patient *Job* so contentedly to entertain the most sad news of the *fo-dain death* of all his children; (m) *The Lord gave*, &c. This made *David* so chearfully say, (n) *Into thine hands I commit my spirit*, &c. And this made (o) *St. Paul* desire to be dissolved and to be with *Christ*, and to count death his exceeding gain. A gain,

Remedy 2.

2. Another thought and consideration that may be of very good use to arm and fortifie Believers against the affection of overmuch Fearfulness and Despondency, is to consider what Death is. Some indeed look upon it as *Summa Malorum*, the *Worst of all evils*; *Rex terrorum*, the *King of fears*, and fancy it to be a most terrible *fiery Serpent*; but the (2) *Sting*, we know, is taken away; and then why, I pray you, should it be so dreadful? In Scripture, I am sure, it is called a *sleep*, a (q) *ceasing from trouble*; a *resting from labours*; and so the Grave, a (r) *bed to rest in*. Now what more grateful and welcome to Nature, when men are wearied and tired out with labour, than to betake themselves to their rest? What more comfortable than a soft Bed? What more desirable and pleasant than sleep?

(l) Psal. 145. 9.

(m) Job 1. 21.

(n) Psal. 31. 5.

(o) Phil. 1. 21.

23.

(p) 1 Cor. 15.

56, 57.

(q) Job 3. 17.

(r) Isai. 57. 2.

sleep? Nay, for some reasons, in *holy Writ*, and by the ancient Fathers, it is very plainly preferred before life: For life (says St. *Augustine*) is nothing at all but *transitus ad mortem*, a passage to death; but *Death* is *introitus in vitam meliorem*, an Entrance into eternal life. This therefore, all things considered, must needs be better, as tending to a more excellent end. No wonder then that you hear St. *John* (s) pronounce (s) Rev. 14. them blessed that dye in the Lord. And good ground it seems 13. had the *Wiseman* to say, (t) that the day of death is better than (t) Eccl. 7. 1. the day of ones birth; and Reason He had (u) to praise the dead, (u) Eccl. 4. 2. which are already dead, more than the living, which are yet alive. It is observable that the very Heathens were wont to celebrate the day of their Birth with sadness, seriousness, and sorrow; but of a friends Death with all mirth, joyfulness, and feasting: So fully and verily were they perswaded of the truth of that memorable Saying of the Oracle, *Optimum non nasci, proximum mori*; i. e. the best and most desirable thing, is not to be born at all; the next, to dy quickly. Let none of us, I beseech you therefore, fall short of them in point of courage and resolution; forasmuch as our hope is not confined only to this life; for then indeed (w) we were of all men most miserable: But we are (w) 1 Cor. 15. assured of unspeakable bliss, and eternal peace in the life 19. to come; and a joyful Resurrection of our bodies at the last day. The *Wiseman* tells us, (x) that the Spirit shall (x) Eccl. 12. 7. return immediately unto God that gave it; and as for the Body, though it be laid in the dust, and (y) sown in corruption, yet it shall be (y) 1 Cor. 15. raised in incorruption; though sown in weakness, yet it shall be raised 42. 43. in power; though sown in dishonour, yet it shall be raised in glory. Which Metaphorical phrase of St. *Paul* gave the holy Fathers occasion to call the *Churchyard*, Gods field upon earth: Wherein the graves are the furrows; the dead Bodies of his Saints are the Seeds sown; and the Resurrection at the last day, the time of harvest, when God will send forth his Reapers, i. e. the holy Angels (as Christ himself expressly (z) calls them) that (z) Mat. 13. they may (a) gather his elect together from the four winds, and 39. from the one end of heaven to the other, even as wheat into his gar- (a) Mat. 24. ner. And then, 31.

3. Another consideration is the impartiality of Death, when Remedy 3.

The Preachers Precept

(x) Horat.
Ode 4.

our appointed time is come, and the natural necessity of it: In regard whereof the Heathen (x) Poet says well, that *aequo pede pulsat, pauperum tabernac, regumq; turres*; i. e. It boldly knocks at the Palace-gates of Princes and Nobles, as well as rings and raps at the doors of poor Peasants. It balks nor spares none when it is sent, be they high or low, rich or poor, young or old:

(b) Heb. 9. 27. For (b) *Statutum est*, &c. It is appointed for all men once to dye.

Death is the greatest Monarch, and the most ancient King in

(c) Rom. 5. 14. the world: For death (says (c) St. Paul) hath reigned from Adam to Moses; to which I may add, that it hath reigned from Moses to us, and so shall still reign over all to the end of the world. Every one without exception must stoop and bow to his

(d) 1 Cor. 15. 41. Scepter. One (d) star indeed may differ from another star in glory,

i. e. in brightness, lustre, and magnitude; but yet we know that as sure as they have their Rise in the West, so sure they are to set in the East: Even so, it's true, One man on earth may differ from another man in glory, i. e. in wisdom, and wealth, or beauty and honour, &c. but yet notwithstanding as sure as they had a rising in their Birth, so they shall have a setting in Death: the honour of the greatest, as well as the meanest, when their appointed time is come, must be laid in the

(e) Eccl. 2. 15.
16.

Dust. For (e) one event happens to them all; and how dyes the wise-

(f) 2 Sam. 14.
14.

man? even as the fool? Dye we must? (said the (f) wise woman of Tekoah) neither doth God respect any person. Now seeing it is thus, that Death is so impartial and unavoidable; what greater folly, pusillanimity, and meanness of spirit can any man be guilty of than to be terrified with the thoughts of it? A far better course I am sure it would be to fit and prepare our selves carefully for it. For then, as 'tis natural and necessary for all to dye, so it would be honourable and comfortable to them: Whereas, an unprofitable Fear of Death serves for no end that I can tell of, but only to render it dreadful and miserable; and is so far from helping any ever a whit more to avoid and escape it, that it doth but rather hasten it upon them. But,

Remedy 4.

(g) Col. 1. 2.

4. The last and principal consideration is the thoughts of that most blessed and advantageous consequence thereof; I mean, that (g) inheritance of the Saints in light, that (h) incor-

ruptible

ruptible Crown of righteousness; that * far more exceeding and * 2 Cor. 4. 17.
eternal weight of Glory, which we hope to be made partakers
of hereafter in Heaven. For k we know (says St. Paul) that when k 2 Cor. 5. 1.
our earthly house of this Tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a
building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the
Heavens. The consideration whereof, one would think should
be enough to quell and suppress all inordinate fears of death,
and rather indeed make it desirable, than terrible to us.

Object. But that which keeps me so much in awe (will some
perhaps plead) and makes my departure hence so terrible, is
my unfitness and uncapableness at present of such a blessed
state and condition.

Answer. If you think so, and this be the Cause; Why do you
not speedily, and in good earnest strive to remove it? *Ipsa*
morte nihil certius, &c. that dye we must, there is nothing more
certain; but as for the circumstance of the *Time* when; the
Place where; and the *Manner* how; there is nothing in the
world more unknown, and by consequence more uncertain:
Why should you then trifle away one minute more of your
precious time, or neglect any good means that may tend to
your Assurance? Consider, I pray, that for this end chiefly it
is that God lends you time, and affords you frequent oppor-
tunities here in this world. And therefore the Apostles Pre-
cept is, See that you walk Circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
redeeming the time, because the days are evil. And likewise St.
Peters Exhortation; *Wherefore, the rather brethren, give all*
diligence to make your calling, and Election sure. And to the same
purpose is that most pithy Prayer of the Psalmist, *Lord teach*
us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto Wis-
dom: Now, Ephes. 5. 15.
16.
2 Pet. 1. 10.
Psal. 90. 12.

Do but thus, and then to remove that last ground and
Cause of Fear that was mentioned, *viz.* The *thoughts of Judg-*
ment to come, know for your comfort, that He that's appoin-
ted then to be Judge, is your Advocate and Mediator, and
will appear for you as a friend and Compurgator. Sometimes
indeed He is called a * Lion, and represented to us in Scrip- * Revel. 5. 5.
ture as a p Refiner, nay sometimes as q a consuming fire in re- p Mal. 3. 2.
lution to the ungodly; but to the righteous, and true Be- q Heb. 12. ult.
C 3 lievers,

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Revel 5. 8.
s Ila. 9. 6.

Math. 25. 41.

* Ibid. v. 34.

Use 2. Of
Exhortat.

The subject-
matters of our
Consideration.

1. The Affli-
ction it self.

† Micah 6. 9.

lievers, he will then be a Lamb, as He is styled (for your comfort) in the *r* *Apocalypse*; and as the Prophet *Isaiah* describes him, he will manifest himself to them, s as a most wise and wonderfull Redeemer, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. So that they need not be afraid of that dreadful doom, t *Abite a me execrati*, &c. Depart from me ye cursed; but may with confident hopes and assurance expect to hear that sweet Absolution and Invitation, * *Adeste benedicti patris mei*, Come ye blessed Children of my Father, receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World. And so much by way of Reprehension. Again,

Is it so, that when Gods judgments are in the Earth, and the sad tokens of his displeasure appear against a Person or Nation, then its a proper season for them seriously to lay things to heart, and wisely to consider? I beseech you then be exhorted to the Duty. And that none of you may be at a stand or loss in your selves for want of fit matter to meditate upon, I shall here now resume, and according to my promise, enlarge my self to the full upon those five forenamed Particulars, which I told you before in the Explication are the most proper subject-matters of our Consideration in the day of adversity.

1. The affliction it self, the evil, disaster, or Visitation whatsoever it be, that is befallne us. This must be seriously thought upon, and considered by us; that so by consulting Gods holy Word, and by the help of his Grace and Spirit, we may come at last (as Himself † requires) to understand the Voyle of Gods Rod, and the mind and meaning of Him that appointed it. Now the present Affliction, and sore Visitation, which we of this great and populous City, with the Places adjacent, and divers eminent Towns of this Nation do so sadly groan and labour under, is that noysom and deadly Epidemical disease of the Plague and Pestilence. Concerning which, to help you a little in your Considerations upon it, I shall briefly subjoyne something, 1. Touching the Names and Metaphorical Appellations that are assigned unto it in Scripture. And then 2. I should likewise adde something concerning the Nature of the Disease: But for this I referr you to the Philosopher and the Physician, whose Art and Profession doth oblige them to search into, and study

study the Nature both of this, and of all other bodily Maladies and Distempers. And I do it the rather, because we shall finde enough in the *Names* to acquaint us with the soul Nature of it; which I heartily wish (if it be Gods will) that none of you that hear me this day may ever experimentally find, nor further understand than by the Names and Characters of it that you hear from others.

1. The most usual Name is that of *Pestis*, quasi *Pereffis* Scripture-
names of the
Plague. (says the *Etymologist*) from the Verb *Peredo*, i. e. to eat through, or utterly to consume and destroy. And thus it is called (as I conceive) from the contagious and most pernicious quality and property of it; which sometimes hath been so extreemly violent, quick, and diffusive, that we read of *above fourteen thousand* that once were destroyed by it in a moment, as you may see plainly, *Numb. 16. 45, 46, 49.* and of *three or four and twenty thousand* that dyed of it in the space of a day, *Numb. 25. 9.* with *1 Cor. 10. 8.* and afterwards of *threescore and ten thousand* that perished by it in the space of three dayes, *2 Sam. 24. 15.* Nay, of an *hundred fourscore and five thousand*, that were swept away by it in the space of one night, as *Isa. 37. 30.*

2. A second Name is that of *Plaga* (whence our *English* word *Plague*) which in *Latine*, we know, properly signifies a *Stroke*: to intimate to us, that where 'tis inflicted, it is as an angry *Stroke* of Gods wrath and vengeance upon a sinful People or Nation. And hence it is also sometimes called *x Per-* x Num. 11. 33.
y Numb. 16. 47.
z Psal. 83. 15, 16,
17. *enissio*, a smiting; sometimes *y Vulneratio & Consternatio*; i. e. *a Consternation and Wounding.* Again,

3. A third Appellation given unto it, is that of *Strages*, *Clades*, & *Ruina*; i. e. *Ruine and Desolation*, (as *S. Pag.* and other *Hebricians* render the Original word in divers places) Exod. 12. 13.
Zech. 14. 12. because it so quickly consumes (as the Prophet *Zechariah* speaks) pulls down and demoliseth these *Earthly Tabernacles* of our Bodies: And for the same respect and reason it is sometimes termed even *Ipsa Mors*, *Very Death*, and *Destraction* it self, as *Psal. 91. 6.*

To these I might adde those *Periphrastical Appellations* in the said Psalm, of a *terror by night*, and *Gods Arrow that flyeth by day*, *vers. 5.* Where note by the way, that both for *Prevention*,

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vention and our Preservation too, the Psalmist directs us to the most safe, and only sure *Refuge* and *Sanctuary*, the *shadow of the wings of the Almighty*, v. 1, & 4. and prescribes the most sovereign and only intallible *Antidote* in the whole world against the infection of the *Plague*, viz. *Our sole dependance and trust in His great mercy and gracious protection*, v. 9, 10. And therefore I think it a *Psalm* fit and worthy to be diligently and daily read over, nay gotten by heart, and hourly meditated upon by all that hope and desire to escape the contagion. For do but thou make the Lord thy refuge, and thy Fortrefe, and his Truth thy shield and buckler, and then thou needest not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the Arrow that flyeth by day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Because thou hast made the Lord, even the most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee; neither shall any Plague come nigh thy dwelling: However, if thou escape not the Visitation, yet thou shalt Gods indignation; * Who shall give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, whilst thou livest in this world; and at last to transport and convey thy Soul into Abrahams bosom.

* Vers. 11.

The destructive
and deadly
nature of it.

These are the well-known usual Names and Appellations assigned unto this *Disease* in Scripture. By which (as I intimated before) you may easily judge of the destructive, foul Nature of it. But if what hath been spoken be not sufficient to represent that to the full unto you; give me leave then to minde you of some emphatical Phrases in Scripture, whereby Gods inflicting of this sore Judgement is expressed by the Holy Ghost. Sometimes it is expressed by causing his anger and jealousy to smite against a Person or Nation, and by separating them unto evil, as Deut. 29. 20, 21, 22. and 2 Chron. 34. 25. Sometimes by heaping mischiefs, and spending his arrows upon them, and devouring them with bitter destruction, as Deut. 32. 23, 24, 25. Sometimes by laying his hand very heavy upon them, and sending a deadly destruction amongst them, as 1 Sam. 5. 11. Sometimes by making men drink the wrath of the Almighty, as Job 21. 30. and the Wormwood-wine of trouble and astonishment, as Psal. 60. 3. 2 Chron. 29. 8. And sometimes by persecuting them with his tempests, and making them afraid

afraid with his storms, as *Psal. 83. 15.* No wonder then, that Almighty God reckons this as one of his four most * sore judgments. *Ezek. 14. 17.* *men.* that he sometimes sends upon a rebellious City or Kingdom. And so much for the first particular subject-matter of our Consideration, the Affliction it self.

2. The Second was the Dispenser and Author of it: And primarily and principally that still is God, who does it for our good. For *b* shall there be evil in a City, and the Lord hath b Amos 3. 6. not done it? No; *Mibi Vindicta: Vengeance is mine, c. I will repay,* saith the Lord. *Ruth 1. 21.* It was the fault of King *Asa,* (*a Chron. 16. 12.*) that in his disease he sought not unto the Lord, but to the Physicians. But we must acknowledge a *Digitus Dei*, The finger of God in this present sad Visitation above and before all other natural and secondary Causes, and look up especially unto Him; or else we are guilty of the same Crime. Generally, there is no evil (as *Job* intimates) but it is a spark of Gods wrath. But in this of the Plague, Gods anger seems to be kindled, as * *Moses* speaks; and those sparks of his wrath to be blown up, as * *Numb. 25. 3.* it were, into a flame.

3. The third was the ground, or the procuring and meritorious Cause of it. And for this we must look into our own hearts, examine our selves, and consider our ways, as being well assured and convinced of this one thing in general beforehand. That it is sin, and nothing but sin that doth withhold good things from us, and which is the Cause of all the Evils, Afflictions, and Miseries that do befall us. More particularly, the Ground and Cause of this most dreadful noysome Disease that we labour under, are of two sorts: Either 1. Such as rationally are supposed, and probably assigned by the Philosopher, and bodily Physician, I mean those external natural Causes, which are briefly summ'd up in the *seasonable Exhortation* annexed to the Form of Prayer for this day. Or else, 2. Such as unreasonably are agreed on by all, and certainly determined by the Divine, and Gods holy Word: I mean those internal and supernatural Causes of our own Sins and Provocations, and Gods just wrath and indignation thereupon: Both which are mentioned, and layd down by the Psalmist as the sole Causes of that deadly Plague which befell the *Israelites* for their Idolatry and Fornication.

2 Psal. 106. 29. Fornication with the Midianites: For thus they provoked the
with Num. 25. *A mighty to anger with their Inventions, and so the Plague brake*

3. *in upon them.* And yet it is not so much for Sin in general, as
rather for some heinous and horrid sins in particular, that Gods
wrath and anger is thus kindled against any people. In my
recounting and discovering of which, I shall (God willing) use
all faithfulness and impartiality without fear or favour:
for which end, I shall not trust to mine own private judgement,
nor yet follow the partial Opinions, and censorious
Fancies of others; who being byassed by their affections and
inclinations, their novel and corrupt Principles and Perswa-
sions, their self-love and interest, are ready hypocritically and
slibrilly to justify themselves, but politickly and maliciously
to cast all the *Odium* they can upon others: And hence it is,
that you hear some mutter and mormure, that it is for the
Sins of the Courts especially, that this fore Judgement is layd
upon us: Others whisper, that the fault is chiefly in the
Bishops and Clergy; who have neither the *Way* nor *Faculty*
themselves to please the generality of the people by their
Preaching and Divine Service, nor yet will permit others,
whom they could fancy, to exercise their Gifts in their
Churches and Pulpits: And a third sort cry out, that it is
because they are persecuted (as they pretend) and are not suf-
fered as in the late *Oliverian* dayes, to enjoy their beloved Li-
berty of Conscience, as they call it: I shall not tread in the steps
of these *Persons* or *Parties*, and with them positively and pe-
remptorily conclude and determine, that this or that parti-
cular thing, these or those *Persons* are the *provoking and merito-
rious Causes* of our unparallel'd *Visitation*; but to prevent all
mistakes and errors in so nearly concerning an Inquiry and
Discovery, I shall steer my course by the *Compass* only of
Gods holy Word, and make that alone my Conduct and Pilor un-
till we be past these most dangerous shelves and quick sands.

In Scripture then, where the sacred Pen-men are never
found to balk either themselves or others; but, quite contrary
to the humour of many in these our dayes, that think so
highly and well of themselves, are alwayes wont faithfully
to record and reveal, yea even aggravate, rather than conceal
and

and extenuate the grossest Errours and Crimes of those, whether Princes, Prophets, Priests or People that have provoked the Almighty to wrath (studying it seems most of all to give due honour and glory to *Gods holy Name*, howsoever they took shame to themselves). In Scripture, I say, I find even *Kings and Princes* themselves arraigned at the *Barre of Gods Justice* as well as their *Subjects*; and sometimes the blame layd upon the one, and sometimes upon the other (for *h He is no respecter of Persons* Acts 10. 34.) for provoking the Lord by some special sins to inflict this sore Judgement upon his People: And yet neither of them pleading Non-guilty to the Accusation and Charge drawn up against them by the *Holy Ghost*, but confessing their Crimes, and humbling themselves in dust and ashes, that by Prayer and Fasting they might obtain pardon.

The special Sins mentioned in Scripture, whereby Kings and Princes have provoked God to pour out the Vials of his wrath in this manner, they are only two, to my best remembrance, *Pride*, and *Blasphemy*.

First, *Pride of heart*, which was *Dauids* Offence, as 2 Sam. 24. with 1 Chron. 21. 1. where you will finde, that through Vain glory, and Satans intigation, *his heart was lifted up to number Israel: but God was displeased with this thing* (says the Text, v. 7.) and therefore *He smote Israel with a violent Plague, which in three dayes destroyed threescore and ten thousand*. It is likewise the judgement of St. *Jerom*, *Cyrl*, and *Theodoret* (as *A Lapid* notes) that to prevent, if not chastise this same dangerous Principle of *Pride* in King *Hezekiah*, which probably he might be inclinable to, and guilty of; upon the conceit and consideration of that miraculous happy deliverance of *Jerusalem* from the force and fury of the King of *Assyria*; when for his sake, and upon his effectual Prayers and Tears, there were near upon two hundred thousand of the Enemies Army * destroyed in one night; their judgement is, that (as some * Isa. 37. 14. to time * *Thorn* in the flesh, the Messenger of Satan was sent to v. 26. St. Paul, to buffet him, lest he shou'd have been exalted above measure, through the abundance of revelations; even so) the Lord was pleased to visit King *Hezekiah* personally with this very Sickness; *Isai. 38. 1, 21*. And yet all, it seems, scarcely enough:

for afterwards, and it goes vent, though its true upon another occasion, and as he pretended out of civility and courtesy to strangers, rather than any ostentation in himself, as Chap. 39. 1, 2, 4.

Secondly, *Blasphemy*; and this was the black and provoking Sin of the aforesaid King of *Assyria*, *Senacherib* I mean, and his compliant foul-mouthed Servant and eloquent Orator, *General Rabshakeh*: whose breath so forcibly blew up the coals of Gods anger, that it presently made his *jealousie burn like fire*, and consume so many thousands of their Men in one night. These are the two only special Sins (as I remember) mentioned in Scripture, whereby Kings and Princes have provoked God to pour out the vials of his wrath in this manner. But sure I am, that we of this Nation, have not the least ground or occasion to suspect or imagine that our *Dread Sovereign* should be guilty of either of them; who hath purchased the Name and Reputation abroad in the world, and also approved Himself here at home, to be both a very wise, and most rarely accomplished Person, as to his natural Parts and Endowments; and also as to his spiritual Gifts and Inclinations, a truly religious, meek, and most gracious, merciful Prince; in short, *a good man as well as a great Monarch*. And therefore we may very well acquit and exonerate Him from all guilt, as to these great and capital Sins; and so by consequence, from the foul Censure of being eminently accessory to the sore Visitation that we now labour under.

Sins of people
that have
caused the
Plague.

The special and particular Sins mentioned in Scripture, whereby common People, I mean, the mixt Multitude, and Body Politick of a Nation, have provoked God to pour out the vials of his wrath in this manner upon them, are diverse: I shall first name them and set them in order before your eyes, by referring you to those plain and express portions of Scripture, where I find them recorded; and then afterwards bring home our Discourse in a brief application unto our selves. They are six in number.

1. *Willful disobedience, and a general Apostasy from the true God, and his holy Laws and Commandments*. This is clear from *Deu. 28. 15, 20, 21*. It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken

unto

unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to do all his Commandments and his Statutes, &c. that then the Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and perish quickly; the Lord shall make the Pestilence cleave unto thee, until He have consumed thee; So Levitic. 26. 21, 22. &c. If ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more Plagues upon you, according to your sins, &c. And if ye will not be reformed by these things, but will still walk contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins, &c. And when ye are gathered together within your Cities, I will send the Pestilence among you.

2. Flat obstinacy, and open rebellion against lawful Magistrates, the higher Powers, that God hath set over us: Which the Apostle tells us is no less than to resist the Ordinance of God; and they that do so shall hereafter receive to themselves Damnation: No wonder then, that at present here this dreadful Judgment of the Plague and Pestilence be threatened by God against all such children of Disobedience; as indeed it is, Num. 14. 2, 3, 4. with vers. 11, 12. Where when the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or in this Wilderness: Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a Captain, and let us return into Egypt. Hereupon the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? I will smite them with the Pestilence and will disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater Nation, and mightier than they. And as it was threatened in this Chapter for this seditious murmuring and conspiracy; so it was actually inflicted upon some in the sixteenth Chapter, viz. fourteen thousand and seven hundred of those Aberrors and Favourers of the Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, as vers. 47. to the end of the Chapter. For the proof of this I might likewise refer you to Jer. 27. 8. with Chap. 21. 6, 9. which you may please to peruse at leisure.

3. A pertinacious resistance of those regular and faithful Ministers, those spiritual Labourers in Christs Vineyard, which by

The Preachers Precept

Gods Providence are sent amongst them: Peoples fighting, despising, revolting and reproaching of these, and like the deaf Adder stopping their ears to the voice of these Charmers: let them charm never so wisely: and on the contrary, running after false Prophets, and because they will not endure sound Doctrine (as the Apostle m

4. Prophecies plainly of them) after their own lusts heaping to themselves teachers of their own (not of Gods I am sure) having itching ears. Now for this, the Plague and other sore judgements are threatened by God; as Jer. 29. 15, 17, 18, 19. Because ye have said, the Lord hath raised us up Prophets in Babylon: Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Behold I will send upon them the Sword, the Famine, and the Pestilence, and will make them like vile figs that cannot be eaten they are so evil. And I will persecute them with the Sword, with the Famine, and with the Pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the Kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach among all the Nations, whither I have driven them: Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the Prophets, rising up early, and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord.

4. The fighting of the Ordinances of God, and particularly the neglect, or at least profanation of and abusing the holy Sacrament of the Lords Supper: Which St. Paul looks upon as the Cause of the sickness and visitation that happened to the Believers at
 11 Cor. 11. 30. n Corinth. Many it seems were come to that pass (as they are even now in these days) that they cared not whether they came or no unto that Sacrament; or at leastwise they came they cared not how. And therefore (says He) for this Cause many are weak and sickly among you, yea, and many are fallen asleepe. And this is no new thing, says the Right reverend Father in God, Bishop Andrews: Moses himself suffer'd for this: His neglect of the Sacrament of Circumcision, to be administered to his Child (out of compliance with his tender-hearted, or if you will, peevish Wife Zipporah) made God to meet him in great anger by the way in the Inne, and it was like to have cost him his life, Exod. 4. 24, 25, 26. The remembrance whereof made him preferre that petition to Pharaoh, * Let me go, we pray thee, three days journey into the Wilderness, and there sacrifice

* Exod. 3-3.

sacrifice unto the Lord our God; In obediſt; If we neglect
our own duty, and ſight his due worſhip and ſervice, He ſhall
upon us with the Peſtilence, or with the Sword: which it ſeems
they might very juſtly fear; "in regard that the Sacrament
of the Paſſion, and the blood of it was their means to ſave
them and their Families from the Plague of the deſtroying
Angel in Egypt; as you may ſee Exod. 12. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27.
- 051. That ſpeaking and unſpeakable Sin of Idolatry: as you
ſhall find Ezek. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 220. 221. 222. 223. 224. 225. 226. 227. 228. 229. 230. 231. 232. 233. 234. 235. 236. 237. 238. 239. 240. 241. 242. 243. 244. 245. 246. 247. 248. 249. 250. 251. 252. 253. 254. 255. 256. 257. 258. 259. 260. 261. 262. 263. 264. 265. 266. 267. 268. 269. 270. 271. 272. 273. 274. 275. 276. 277. 278. 279. 280. 281. 282. 283. 284. 285. 286. 287. 288. 289. 290. 291. 292. 293. 294. 295. 296. 297. 298. 299. 300. 301. 302. 303. 304. 305. 306. 307. 308. 309. 310. 311. 312. 313. 314. 315. 316. 317. 318. 319. 320. 321. 322. 323. 324. 325. 326. 327. 328. 329. 330. 331. 332. 333. 334. 335. 336. 337. 338. 339. 340. 341. 342. 343. 344. 345. 346. 347. 348. 349. 350. 351. 352. 353. 354. 355. 356. 357. 358. 359. 360. 361. 362. 363. 364. 365. 366. 367. 368. 369. 370. 371. 372. 373. 374. 375. 376. 377. 378. 379. 380. 381. 382. 383. 384. 385. 386. 387. 388. 389. 390. 391. 392. 393. 394. 395. 396. 397. 398. 399. 400. 401. 402. 403. 404. 405. 406. 407. 408. 409. 410. 411. 412. 413. 414. 415. 416. 417. 418. 419. 420. 421. 422. 423. 424. 425. 426. 427. 428. 429. 430. 431. 432. 433. 434. 435. 436. 437. 438. 439. 440. 441. 442. 443. 444. 445. 446. 447. 448. 449. 450. 451. 452. 453. 454. 455. 456. 457. 458. 459. 460. 461. 462. 463. 464. 465. 466. 467. 468. 469. 470. 471. 472. 473. 474. 475. 476. 477. 478. 479. 480. 481. 482. 483. 484. 485. 486. 487. 488. 489. 490. 491. 492. 493. 494. 495. 496. 497. 498. 499. 500. 501. 502. 503. 504. 505. 506. 507. 508. 509. 510. 511. 512. 513. 514. 515. 516. 517. 518. 519. 520. 521. 522. 523. 524. 525. 526. 527. 528. 529. 530. 531. 532. 533. 534. 535. 536. 537. 538. 539. 540. 541. 542. 543. 544. 545. 546. 547. 548. 549. 550. 551. 552. 553. 554. 555. 556. 557. 558. 559. 560. 561. 562. 563. 564. 565. 566. 567. 568. 569. 570. 571. 572. 573. 574. 575. 576. 577. 578. 579. 580. 581. 582. 583. 584. 585. 586. 587. 588. 589. 590. 591. 592. 593. 594. 595. 596. 597. 598. 599. 600. 601. 602. 603. 604. 605. 606. 607. 608. 609. 610. 611. 612. 613. 614. 615. 616. 617. 618. 619. 620. 621. 622. 623. 624. 625. 626. 627. 628. 629. 630. 631. 632. 633. 634. 635. 636. 637. 638. 639. 640. 641. 642. 643. 644. 645. 646. 647. 648. 649. 650. 651. 652. 653. 654. 655. 656. 657. 658. 659. 660. 661. 662. 663. 664. 665. 666. 667. 668. 669. 670. 671. 672. 673. 674. 675. 676. 677. 678. 679. 680. 681. 682. 683. 684. 685. 686. 687. 688. 689. 690. 691. 692. 693. 694. 695. 696. 697. 698. 699. 700. 701. 702. 703. 704. 705. 706. 707. 708. 709. 710. 711. 712. 713. 714. 715. 716. 717. 718. 719. 720. 721. 722. 723. 724. 725. 726. 727. 728. 729. 730. 731. 732. 733. 734. 735. 736. 737. 738. 739. 740. 741. 742. 743. 744. 745. 746. 747. 748. 749. 750. 751. 752. 753. 754. 755. 756. 757. 758. 759. 760. 761. 762. 763. 764. 765. 766. 767. 768. 769. 770. 771. 772. 773. 774. 775. 776. 777. 778. 779. 780. 781. 782. 783. 784. 785. 786. 787. 788. 789. 790. 791. 792. 793. 794. 795. 796. 797. 798. 799. 800. 801. 802. 803. 804. 805. 806. 807. 808. 809. 810. 811. 812. 813. 814. 815. 816. 817. 818. 819. 820. 821. 822. 823. 824. 825. 826. 827. 828. 829. 830. 831. 832. 833. 834. 835. 836. 837. 838. 839. 840. 841. 842. 843. 844. 845. 846. 847. 848. 849. 850. 851. 852. 853. 854. 855. 856. 857. 858. 859. 860. 861. 862. 863. 864. 865. 866. 867. 868. 869. 870. 871. 872. 873. 874. 875. 876. 877. 878. 879. 880. 881. 882. 883. 884. 885. 886. 887. 888. 889. 890. 891. 892. 893. 894. 895. 896. 897. 898. 899. 900. 901. 902. 903. 904. 905. 906. 907. 908. 909. 910. 911. 912. 913. 914. 915. 916. 917. 918. 919. 920. 921. 922. 923. 924. 925. 926. 927. 928. 929. 930. 931. 932. 933. 934. 935. 936. 937. 938. 939. 940. 941. 942. 943. 944. 945. 946. 947. 948. 949. 950. 951. 952. 953. 954. 955. 956. 957. 958. 959. 960. 961. 962. 963. 964. 965. 966. 967. 968. 969. 970. 971. 972. 973. 974. 975. 976. 977. 978. 979. 980. 981. 982. 983. 984. 985. 986. 987. 988. 989. 990. 991. 992. 993. 994. 995. 996. 997. 998. 999. 1000.

For which, as we ſometimes p read that four eminent Cities
were deſtroyed by Fire and Brimſtone from heaven; viz. Sodom,
Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim; and the whole plain Country
turned into a ſtanding ſtinking Lake, called The Dead Sea to
this day; So afterwards, when the Children of Iſrael joyning
themſelves unto Baal Peor were grown to that height of wicked-
neſs and impudence, as to commit openly with the Daughters
of Moab and Midian, this grievous judgement of the Plague
and Peſtilence was inflicted upon them for it; as you may ſee,
Pſal. 106. 28, 29. and more fully Numb. 25. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
"A proper puniſhment (ſays my Reverend Author) for ſo
"heinous a provocation, ſeeing the foul ſin of fornication
"commonly ends in ſores and ulcers, which are as infectious as
"the Plague it ſelf.
Theſe, I think, are all the ſpecial and particular Sins
mentioned in Scripture, whereby common People, I mean the
mixt Multitude and Body Politick of a Nation have provoked
God to pour out the Viſe of his wrath and fury in this manner

1 Rom. 15. 4. &
1 Cor. 10. 6.

1 Cor. 10.

11.

12.

The Authors

opinion, why

this fore judge-

ment is now

laid upon us.

1 Jam. 3. 2.

upon them. Now *seeing* that *all* these things were written
foretime, were written for our learning, and that these things
are our examples, to the end that we should not tempt, and pro-
voke Gods wrath, as others have done, by the commission of these
gross sins, to inflict this most dreadful Judgment upon us: But
yet forasmuch as Gods anger hath been of late, and still is
stretched out against us this way, in an extraordinary severe
manner: We may therefore be sure, that it is for some or o-
ther of the aforesaid iniquities which we of this Christian Nation
in general, and this populous City in particular, epidemical-
ly, my meaning is, for the major part stand guilty of, that
this unparallel'd and sore Judgment is laid upon us. To expiate
which, Oh that there were such truly ingenuous, tender, and
honest hearts in every one of us, that in our Confessions and
Deprecations we might deal as faithfully and impartially
betwixt God and our own Souls, as the sacred Penmen of Scrip-
ture have done in declaring the sins and provocations of Gods
people, and His severe punishments and Judgments upon them
for the same. For all these things happened unto them for ex-
amples: and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the
ends of the world are come, that we should not be as they were.

If any of you expect and desire that I should here now
declare my Opinion, for which of the forementioned sins I
conceive it is, that this sore Judgment is laid upon us, (though
I know such desires are commonly made out of design, that
people may know how to affect and fancy the Preacher yet) I
shall not scruple very briefly and plainly to give you my judg-
ment, *viz.* That I do not think that it is for this or that one
sin in particular, but rather for them all: As it's true with
St. James, That *in many things we offend all*: So here it may al-
so as truly be said, that *all these things* I think the fore-
mentioned Capital Crimes, we offend too many. For which of the six
can we instance in, of which there are not many amongst us
that must needs confess themselves guilty? And we leave to
make some short reflections upon them severally, and then I
shall leave you all to judge. Now in this disposition I shall
observe a retrograde Motion, beginning with that which I
ended with, when I named them before, that is to say, the first
be last, and the last may be first.

1. In

1. In the first place then, for the foul Sin of Fornication and uncleanness; may not Almighty God bring the same charge against many, very many of this City and Nation, that He sometimes brought against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of the Jews? *When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses: they were as fed Horses in the morning, every one neighed after his Neighbours wife.* And what then follows? Now, how shall I pardon thee for this? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? And then

2. Secondly, for that provoking and unpardonable Sin of Idolatry. You must know it is twofold: either visible and external in reference to the Body, or else spiritual and internal in reference to the Soul. Now, though I hope and believe that there are few or none amongst us so notoriously wicked as to be guilty of the former; I mean, to contrive and make to themselves graven Images, and then fall down and worship them as Gods, (unless it be some of the most wretched and grossest sort of Papists) yet I doubt there are too many amongst us guilty of the latter, spiritual and internal Idolatry. For you must note,

1. That *that* is every mans God or Idol, which his heart is most of all set upon. Now, if it be not the only true God, but wrong objects, he is *ipso facto* guilty of Idolatry. Thus the fortish Winebibber, and gluttonous Epicure may be justly called Idolaters, because they * make their belly their God; but † they regard not the works of the Lord, neither consider the operations of ‡ his hands. Thus also the wretched Worldling, and covetous Adammonist, who x maketh gold his hope, and trusteth in the multitude of his riches, is a plain Idolater (as the Apostle y calls him) because he makes an Idol of his wealth. And thus lastly, He that trusteth in man more than in God, is a meer Idolater and accursed before God, because he z maketh flesh his arm, and his heart departeth from the Lord. And then

2. To think amiss, and otherwise of God than He is represented unto us in his holy Word, this again is Idolatry; * Because a perverse and wicked opinion of God is no less than

E

a graven

Phil. 3. 19.
Jer. 17. 5.
Job 31. 24.
Col. 3. 5.
Jer. 17. 5.
Quia sculpsit & conflavit eorum dogmata esse perversa, que ab his qui-bus facta sunt adorantur. Hier.

a graven Image, says St. Jerome. And therefore both he and St. Augustine agree, that *Usque hodie in Templo Dei*, &c. i. e. even to this very day there are many amongst us that set up Idols in the Church of God, when men in their hearts & minds conceive and feign any new, erroneous, and unworthy opinions, especially concerning the Persons of the *blessed Trinity*. Now, whether many amongst us may not be thought guilty of this kind of Idolatry is easie to imagine: And then let such know, that they cannot clear nor acquit themselves from having a hand in pulling down this present heavy Judgement upon us.

3. Thirdly, For *sighting and contemning the Ordinances of Christ*, and particularly the Neglect, or at least profanation of and abusing the Sacrament of the Lords Supper: Never was Generation of men professing Christianity, in any Age or part of the world more guilty of this, than those that still are, and of late years have been the greatest Pretenders to extraordinary Zeal and Devotion, strictness and Reformation amongst us. And hence it is, that when Times and Dayes are solemnly appointed for the celebration of that Sacrament; though serious warnings, and earnest Exhortations are used by us the Ministers of Jesus Christ, to perswade and prepare people for a worthy, a comfortable, and a frequent participation of the *sacred Elements* there exhibited, viz. the *blessed Body and Blood of Christ*; yet you shall finde few or none of that Faction and party affording their presence: As if they had never read nor heard of, or at least were resolved not to believe nor regard those words of our Saviour; b *Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* Which words, and whole Chapter, I wonder how they can read without horror and astonishment, when they consider and call to minde how irregularly they walk, and directly contrary both to the expresse Precept of Christ, and also the apparent constant Practice of the Apostles themselves, and the Saints and Martyrs of the Church in all Ages. And if such as these,

who

b Joh. 6. 53,
54, 55.

who have gotten the name and reputation of *Religious and strict walkers*, be thus obstinate, and so exceeding faulty in this point : then what can be looked for from many others vicious, loose, and prophane in their lives, but that, as we find, they should either plead the others example for their absence from, and neglect of this Sacrament ; or else, as we fear, presumptuously approach the *Lords Table* with unprepared and unsanctified hearts and hands ; to the great dishonour and profanation of *Gods holy Ordinance*, and the *damnation* of their own souls ?
1 Cor. 11. 29. Again,

4. For that *pertinacious Resistance* of those regular and faithful Ministers, those spiritual Labourers in *Christ's Vineyard* which by *Gods Providence* are sent forth ; for *Peoples* slighting, reviling, despising and reproaching of these, and on the contrary, running after false Prophets, as I said before ; that too too many are guilty of this, may easily be seen every *Lords-day*, every *Fast*, and *Festival-day*, when, if it be known (I am ashamed and even tremble to speak it) that there is like to be nothing at Church but only that which is purely divine, viz. *Gods holy Word* distinctly read, and our most excellent *publick Prayers and pishy Ejaculations* devoutly poured out at the throne of *Gods grace*, for our selves, for our Sovereign and his Kingdoms ; for *Grace, Mercy, and Pardon of sin*, with *Peace and Prosperity* : Or if it be known, that the Minister hath a *Set-form of Prayer*, and makes use of his *Notes* in his preaching ; then you shall scarcely have more of one *Party* (whose *Prejudice and Fancy* is above their *Reason, Religion, and Conscience*) than *Stone-pillars* to make their appearance for that time. But let information and notice be given that some *Stentorean* fam'd *Non-Conformist*, some popular and newly cryed-up Preacher, that seems to pray without premeditation, and preacheth without book, never looking upon Notes nor Bible : One that will neither use himself, nor trouble them with the *Prayers of the Church*, but entertain them only with a *Psalms*, a *Prayer of his own extemporary Effusion*, and a pleasing, plausible discourse, concerning a *strict and close walking with God*, the *illuminations and inward operations of the Spirit of Grace*, an *Interest in Christ and the New Covenant*, &c. And withall, in his Application

cation will declaim with a great deal of zeal, affection and vehemency against those sins which our Superiours in Church and State, or others in general, that are not of the same strain and opinion with himself, are usually censured and supposed to be most guilty of, (which is an effectual, fine subtle way, to beget disaffection, and sow the seeds of sedition in peoples hearts towards their Governours, as also to beget inward heart-burnings in them, with censoriousness, divisions, and uncharitableness towards their brethren:) Let it, I say, be but noysed, nay whispered abroad that such a one is to *teach* in this or that place, either Morning or Afternoon; and then though the Church were as large as *St. Pauls*, yet it will scarcely find room enough to receive and contain the disorderly Rabble of his sequacious eager followers. You all I believe, know and observe this to be true; and many perhaps think it no crime, but rather commendable, in regard it is so customary and ordinary; yea the principal Thing that is now in fashion, as to Religion, as being the chief and only means (this slighting of Prayers, and running after Sermons) to gain one the *Name and Reputation of a Religious, godly Person*. But had I time to discover unto you the mischievous and unhappy *Effects and Consequences* of it, and that as well in respect of the *Publick*, as of mens own *Souls and Consciences*, in regard it is *this* that begets heart-burnings and animosities amongst Christian Neighbours (as I hinted before) with divisions, censurings, and uncharitableness each unto others; it's *this* that breeds and feeds, and foment that causeless discontent and disaffection in peoples Hearts towards their Superiours; it's *this* that kindles the first sparks of sedition, disobedience, and Rebellion against lawfull Magistrates, which are ready to break out into a flame, when opportunity offers it self; it's apparently *this* that makes people so *unsettled in judgement*, and *unstable in all their wayes*, & ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; in a word, it is *this*, that makes many * in these last perillous times (according to the Apostles prediction) to be self-lovers, proud, boasters, disobedient to Parents, without natural affection, false accusers, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitours, heady, high-minded, having

* Jam. 1. 8.

* 2 Tim. 3. 7.

* Ibid. v. 2, 3,

do 5.

ving indeed a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; had I but time to demonstrate these things, as it were ealie both by *Scripture*, plain *Reason*, Ecclesiastical *History*, and our own certain *Experience* of the like Events from the same Causes, in the late times of Liberty and Confusion, I should clearly make it appear unto you, That this irregular itching humour of Curiosity, and affecting of novelties is, though not so scandalous in the sight of men, yet as hainous in the sight of God, and mischievous to Peoples Souls as any Crime that they can lightly be guilty of. For it's by this (as the f grand Tradition of the late Scribes and Elders amongst us) f Math. 15.6. that the Pharisaical Men of this Generation have made the Commandments and Precepts of Christ and his Apostles, concerning good Order, Discipline, and Decency in the Church, concerning Subjection and Obedience to Civil Magistrates, concerning Affection and due Reverence towards Christs Ministers, concerning brotherly Love and Union amongst Christian Neighbours, of none effect. I speak nothing but what is notoriously known to be Truth, by all uninterested, judicious, sober and solid Christians. And therefore no wonder, that Gods anger is waxed thus hot, and his jealousie burn like fire against such a refractory, obitainately erroneous, and indeed antichristian a generation as this: Which may very well (in g Math. 21. the g words of our Saviour) be likened unto Children sitting in 16, 17. the Market-place, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; We have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For, even so in this age, we find one party still opposing, countermining, and walking contrary to another: So that let Christ send what Labourers soever He please into his harvest, though never so innocent, honest, able, and faithfull; though never so carefull to follow His, and His blessed Apostles example, and that in respect both of Life and Doctrine; though never so conscientious in the performance of all Ministerial Offices and Duties, according to His expresse direction, the infallible and harmonious tenour and Canon of Scripture, to the great comfort and satisfaction of all humble-minded and honest-hearted persons amongst us; who therefore b esteem them very highly in love, for their works b 1 Thess. 5.13. sake, and count * them worthy of double honour: Yet the devout * 1 Tim. 5.17.

^k 2 Pet. 2. 10.
with Jude v. 8.

^l Psal. 2. 3.

^m Luk 19. 14.

Will-worshippers, and religious *k* despisers of Government, in these dayes, who to compass their ends, and carry on their designs, are not afraid to speak evil of Dignities, preferring Novelty before Antiquity, a Formal Shew above Reality, Self-interest and worldly Reputation, before Gods Acceptance and Approbation; these will evermore have one fault or other to finde with them, and rather than fail, invent and forge reproaches and scandals, that so they may have some plausible pretence to *l* break their bands asunder, and cast away their Cords from them. Now, what is this, but in effect to tell our Saviour, that they are grown weary of *His* Government and Oeconomy, and now *m* will have *Him* no longer to reign over them, unless He'll accept of a new way of Worship, according to some mode of their own that is now in fashion: All other Forms, and traditional Platforms, though never so authentick, and apparently *Jure Divino*, are counted by them to be but Idolatrous and Superstitious. And then,

5. *For that flat Obstinacy, and open Rebellion against lawfull Magistrates, the Higher Powers that God hath set over us:* Though I know none at present actually guilty of it, yet that must be attributed not so much to the happy change of many mens mindes, or any peaceable and truly Christian Principles in them, as rather to the good Providence of God, and the watchful wisdom, courage and diligence of those in Authority. Sure I am, there is no want of implacable Male-contentes, and most turbulent-spirited Incendiaries amongst us, to will and endeavour it; and with as much subtilty, malice, and secrecie as it is possible. *They rise up early and lye down late, and eat the bread of carefulness;* they spare no pains, they stick at no difficulties nor dangers, but attempt and assay all ways and means; yea, they are ready to compass even Sea and Land, and all in hopes to compass their end. Nay, rather than fail to carry on their design, some there are that cunningly can transform themselves into Angels of Light, to trappann the well-meaning ignorant vulgar unto their side: For which end, they very forwardly thrust themselves, or steal sliely into our Pulpits, and there vehemently enough (it's true) inveigh against the gross scandalous sins of Pride and Profaneness, Gluttony and Drunkenness, Whoredom, Swearing, and Sabbath-breaking; strongly
in-

insinuating, that all but themselves and those of their Party, are certainly guilty of some of them, and so are in danger of Hell and Damnation : But the mischief and wickedness of it is, that whilst they thus openly pretend, that they come only to beat down sin, and save peoples Souls, by perswading them to a close walking with God, and strict Obedience to the Gospel of Christ, they secretly withall intend to tak them out of all their Allegiance, love and duty towards their Superiours both in Church and State: they name and proclaim themselves indeed, to be the *Messengers of God, and Ambassadors of Jesus Christ* ; but by their fruits we may easily judge whose *Emissaries* they are, in that the main drift and tendency of their preaching is to dispose and work poor people into a murmuring against, a slighting of, and disobedience to all humane and Ecclesiastical Constitutions, let them be never so reasonable, never so religious, and consensaneous to Gods holy Word. And all (forsooth) under the specious fair pretense, that primarily all people are the subjects and servants of *Jesus Christ*, and ought to obey God rather than *Man* ; as if the Commandments and Institutions, the Ecclesiastical Discipline and holy Ordinances of Christ himself and his Apostles, being approved of, and inforced by the authority of those that God hath set over us, must not, ought not then to be obeyed or observed by them, only because they are re-imposed and required of them by the commendable and good Statutes of Christian Magistrates. Before this was done, they could not but confess, that they were binding to the Consciences of all sound Believers ; but now they would rather have the *Godly* to think, that they are bound in Conscience to condemn and oppose them. The full perswasion of which destructive and wicked Tenet, they never leave till they have frightened them into, with the frequent and terrible threats of *Hell and Damnation*. And if this be not a most provoking and crying sin, I know nothing that is. If any here shall object, that I am very harsh and severe : give me leave to tell them, that I never was their Auditor my self ; but, as a fuller conviction, and a much stronger * testimony against them, I have always observed by * *Vox Populi,*] the report and discourse of many of their seduced followers, *vox Dei.*] that this is the very sense and meaning that they all pick out of their Sermons ; and besides, I have read some of their plausible

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The Preachers Precept

printed Papers my self, but know not how to make any other construction of them. If still they plead the integrity and sincerity of their own hearts, as perfectly free from, and utterly ignorant and innocent of all such evil intentions, as I alledge and charge upon them; let me tell them in the words of our Saviour, that *they know not what manner of spirit they are of*; for most of them are as surely guilty, as he that once said to the Prophet *Elisha*, * *But what is thy servant a Dog?* And this I could very easily evince, and clearly demonstrate, by referring them to their own, and others Experience about five or six and twenty years ago: when there were many as sincere and zealous in their pretences for a thorow Reformation, for the CAUSE of *Jesus Christ*, as they termed it, for the advancement of Truth and the Gospel, and for the salvation of Souls, as any possibly can be now; who yet afterwards saw, and confessed, and bewailed themselves, for that they unadvisedly had been too accessory and instrumental to pull up the Flood-gates, and let in a deluge of Rebellion, Confusion, and desolation that ensued thereupon. Which I earnestly wish, that all our hot, young Non-Conformists, and their affectionate factious followers would seriously lay well to heart, lest a worse Judgement than this of the Plague be inflicted upon us.

6. Lastly, *For that wilful Disobedience, and general Apostasy from the true God, and his holy Laws and Commandments*; Never sure were the *Children of Israel* more guilty of this, than the *People of England* are in these days. When, betwixt a great deal of blind Ignorance, practical Atheism, and open Profaness on the one hand, and a great deal of Hypocrisy, spiritual Pride, and Obstinacy in error on the other, the true Fear of God, Love to his Name, and Obedience to his righteous Laws and Statutes seem to be quite extinguished amongst us. O the Deluge of Sin and Wickedness that seems to have quite overflowed both City and Country! Where is the man that with *Nathaniel*, may well be called an *Israelite* indeed, as exercising himself (with *St. Paul*) to have *p* always a Conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards men? It was the complaint of Almighty God in ancient time, and his upbraiding expostulation with the Nation of the *Jews*; *q* *Pass ye over the Isles of Chittim, and see: send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be*

n Luk. 9. 55.

* 2 King. 8. 13.

p Act. 24. 16.

q Jer. 2. 10, 11,
12, 13.

to such a thing as this in the whole world; Hath a Nation changed their gods, which are yet no Gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit. Be astonished O ye Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewn them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no water. And it may be as justly said and applyed to this Nation of ours. Wherefore, as he speak *r* Jer. 9. 12, 13, 14.
ter, Who is the wise man that may understand this, and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the Land perisheth, and is burnt up like a Wilderness, that none passeth thorow? And to this the Lord maketh answer, and saith, Because men have forsaken my Law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voyce, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, &c.

Thus have I run through the forenamed six particular capital Crimes mentioned in the Scripture, whereby common people, or the mixt multitude, and Body politick of a Nation have provoked God to pour out his vials of wrath and fury in this manner upon them: And have likewise brought home my Discourse, and made it appear apparently to you, that there are too too many amongst us guilty of each of them. Not but that I believe we have *our tens, our thirties, and our fifties of good and righteous persons* among us: For whose sakes, I hope and trust that Almighty God will in his due time look down from heaven in mercy upon us, and heal our Land. Now, for which of the aforesaid sins *this sore judgement* is laid upon us, I have given you mine Opinion already, and shall say no more, but (as I said) leave you all to judge: but judge, I would have you, your selves chiefly rather than others. Charity towards them, and fervent Prayers for them would be very good and commendable in you, but faithfulness and impartiality towards your selves is very necessary, and will be most profitable for you. And wherein any of you find your selves guilty, I beseech you repent, forsake your sins, and turn unto God by prayers, and tears, and firm resolutions; and then He will turn from the fierceness of his wrath. When every one sweeps before his own door, the streets you know, will quickly be clean; so let every one take but care to get the plague of his own heart cured, and then this sad judgement

ment of the Plague and Pestilence, shall be as quickly removed from us. And so I have done with the third particular Subject-matter of our consideration in the day of adversity.

4. The end of it. 4. The fourth is, the end of it, or the mind and meaning of God therein. And that may be either 1. For the tryal, the fatherly chastisement and correction of some, viz. the righteous, his own true Children and Servants. For s whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth; even as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth. And therefore St. Peter's good counsel is, t Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery tryal, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoyce, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christs sufferings. Or else 2. For the just punishment and destruction of others, viz. the wicked and ungodly; according to that of Job, * Is not destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Or 3. lastly, generally and certainly for the amendment and Instruction of all. The Apostle observes, that when the Father of Spirits afflicts and corrects the children of men, It is † for their profit, that so they may be partakers of his holiness: And the Prophet tells us, That x when Gods judgements are in the earth, the end thereof is, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness. And hence it is that God in Scripture is sometimes compared to a * Refiner, Mal. 3:3: and sometimes to a Thresher, Hab. 3:12. Whose fan is in his hand, that he may thorowly purge his floor, but gather his wheat into his garner.

5. The way to have it removed.

5. The last is, the good way and means that we are to use, that so it may be removed from us, or at least we may have it sanctified to us. And for this I refer you for full satisfaction to the usefull and seasonable Exhortation, set forth by the Church, and approved by Authority. And so here at present it shal suffice briefly to tell you, that the ways and means are of two sorts in general. 1. Moral and natural; such as our own discretion and reason prompt us unto; or the experience, and more mature knowledge of others direct us unto. 2. Spiritual and Theological; and such are patience and contentation, humble submission and self-resignation; earnest prayer and supplications, with a Amendment of life, and a real Reformation. I shall but barely name these things, because I desire to subjoyn something by way of Motive to inforce the duty of Consideration now in this dismal day of Adversity: As,

1. There

1. There is nothing more proper and seasonable for the present juncture of time; so much the Spirit of God here assures us. Now it is the Wisemans well known comparifon, *γ Verbum γ Prov 25. 11. opportune dictum, &c. A word fitly spoken is like Apples of Gold in pictures of Silver.* And if words (which we say are but wind) only because they are pertinent and seasonable, be thus excellent, beautifull, and amiable in the esteems of rational men: surely then, *Opus opportune factum*, a good work and duty seasonably, seriously and well done and performed by us, is no less valuable in the account of Almighty God. It's very true, as the heathen * Τὸ ἀγαθὸν Orator long since observed, * That what's out of season, & out of fashion, seldom meets with peoples good liking and approbation: but on the contrary, *α Solomon tells us, that God hath made every thing beautifull in it's time.* Such therefore is the Duty enjoined here in this text; & that very strongly commends it to us.

Mot. 1.

2. There is nothing more excellent and commendable as to the work and duty it self. *Consideration!* it is the searcher of the heart, the Manure of the Soul, the fosterer of zeal, the remedy against security, the improvement of Christianity, the ladder of heaven, and the key of Paradise. *Consideration!* it is as watering to Plants, as blowing to the Fire, as Oyl to stiffe joynts, as Physick to the sick: It urgeth to repentance, quickeneth to Prayer, confirmeth Faith, kindleth Love, encourageth in well-doing, and refresheth with heavenly consolations.

Mot. 2.

3. There is nothing more well-pleasing and acceptable to God. *Enoch* for this was rewarded with a † glorious translation. † Gen. 5. 24. And indeed for what end hath God given us the great things of his Law, committed to us his sacred Oracles, caused the Scriptures to be written for our learning, sent his Prophets to declare his good will and pleasure to us; yea, sent forth his Son to reveal his thoughts, which are thoughts of mercy, love & peace to usward? Certainly, not that all these things should be slighted by us, but pondered upon in our hearts, and well improved by a due and serious *Consideration*. And the more we do so, the more without doubt we shall please him; this being the best way to honour him, and to expresse our thankfulness to him for them.

Mot. 3.

4. There is nothing more necessary, nothing more advantageous and profitable to our own souls, as was shew'd you before in the * Introduction. Wherefore to conclude, would it thou

Mot. 4.

* Page 34.

be blessed in all thy Enterprises and Concernments with the blessings of God? would'it thou have thy understanding enlightened with the knowledge of God? thine affections inflamed with the love of God, thine heart established with the Promises of God, thy solitariness cheered up with the fellowship of God, thy afflictions sweetened and mitigated with the comforts of God, and all thy thoughts, words, and actions regulated by the Commands of God? then let thy daily practice be to *Pray and Consider*. For, in the day of adversity, there is nothing then more proper and reasonable, nothing then more excellent & commendable, nothing then more well-pleasing and acceptable, nothing then (no nor indeed at any time else) more advantageous, necessary and profitable. Consider therefore then especially, and well and wisely weigh with thy self, 1. *The evil, disaster, or visitation it self, what-soever it be, that is befalling thee.* 2. *The Dispenser and Author of it.* 3. *The ground, or the procuring and meritorious cause of it.* 4. *The End, or the mind and meaning of God therein: and* 5. *The good way and means that is to be used, that so it may be removed from thee, or else may be sanctified to thee.*

To which five particulars, give me leave here to adde, in the close of all, one Object more, which you may do well to exercise your Consideration upon; Consider the Poor, the afflicted members of Jesus Christ: Whose wants, and whose number are very much increased since this sad time of Visitations; and whose condition you may easily imagine must needs be so exceeding helpless and deplorable, (since all trading and employments are almost quite dead and gone) that there never was more reason for the Rich to consider the Poor: And for your encouragement know,

b Prov. 19. 17. b That he that hath pity upon the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again. Neither shall it go
c Psal. 41. 1, 2. without a Blessing in this world, as an Overplus; for, c Blessed is the man that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble: Yea, the Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the Earth. I, and for a further encouragement still, I pass my word and promise to you beforehand, That what you shall give shall not go out of the Parish, but shall be expended and bestowed upon our own Poor; for so, I am sure, the Receiver General appointed by his Majesty, the candid and untrainted Right Reverend Bishop of this Diocese, will be well-pleased that * henceforth it should be disposed of,

* Octob. 4.
1665.

F I N I S.